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Senate

The Senate met at 9:15 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, You are the source of life and peace. Holy is Your Name forever. We know it is You who turns our hearts toward thoughts of unity. Use Your power to transform our lives.

Lord, as our Senators face the challenges of today and tomorrow, give them a faith that will not shrink, though threats by many a foe. May they refuse to tremble on the brink of any earthly woe, believing that all things are possible to those who harness faith's power. Give them an understanding that puts an end to strife, mercy that quenches animosity, and forgiveness that overcomes vengeance. Help them, Lord, to press on in the battle for truth, righteousness, and justice.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 30, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COONS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the Defense Authorization Act. There will be four rollcall votes at 9:30 a.m.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I ask unanimous consent that all votes after the first vote be 10 minutes in duration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIPARTISANSHIP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this week something rare occurred here in the Senate: We debated a bill under regular order. No filibusters were mounted, no cloture motions were filed on the motion to proceed. That is certainly a rare occasion. For that reason we have had ample time to debate and consider amendments. This is how the process should work.

Typically, over the last few years we have spent weeks running out the clock on endless procedural motions rather than debating important legislation. It is no wonder the Senate rarely accomplishes anything when it takes more than a week to have a vote even to begin a bill; that is, whether we even take up a bill, start debate on a bill.

I would note, however, that even in this case, and this is an important

piece of legislation, the Defense authorization bill—I did not have to file cloture to get to the bill, but we spent weeks going back and forth to get this bill to the floor. Even though the bill managers are working mightily to make regular order work, a number of Senators have advanced nonrelevant amendments, threatening to derail the process. More than 360 amendments have been filed to this bill, many of them nonrelevant. I understand there is a lot of pent-up feelings about: Why have I not been able to offer amendments the last couple of years? Well, because we have not gotten on bills, and when we do, nothing much happens because of the problems that have developed.

A number of my colleagues, especially this past week, both Democrats and Republicans, have come to me asking for a better path forward in this body, this legislative body we so love. They want the Senate to function again in the manner the Founders envisioned. They want to see us debate legislation, consider relevant amendments, and then vote up or down on the matters before this body. Senators want to see us conclude legislation, pass or fail. Let's decide what we are going to do, not avoid doing something. They do not want to see more good bills filibustered to death without ever even getting a real vote. If a bill is worth bringing to the floor of this body, the Senate, it should get to the floor so we can start the debate.

One reason we have been able to work with 50, 60 amendments on this bill—actually that are disposed of—is because we did not have to waste time for more than a week on a motion to proceed to get to it. So I repeat, if a bill is worth bringing to the floor of this body, it should get to the floor quickly. It deserves an up-or-down vote once we go on it.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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